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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 0167
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 2199

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000372

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STATE PASS TO USTR PBURKHEAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: DANISH PRODUCT BOYCOTT AMONG COOPERATIVES
SUPPORTED BY SOME PARLIAMENTARIANS, NOT GOK

REF: COPENHAGEN 124

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: In reaction to the publication in a Danish newspaper of cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad (Reftel), an informal boycott of Danish goods by Kuwaiti cooperatives has drawn support from several sectors of Kuwaiti civil and political society, but not from the GOK itself. Cooperatives have been the most visible proponents of the boycott by removing Danish goods from store shelves, and public statements of support have come from the faculty of Kuwait University and MPs, some of whom have called for an economic and diplomatic boycott of Denmark. On January 28, the GOK circulated a statement that it will summon the Danish Ambassador in Riyadh (who also is accredited to Kuwait) to discuss what it describes as "repulsive, racist stereotypes," but did not support the boycott. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) In reaction to the publication of cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammed in a Danish newspaper, Kuwaiti cooperatives began removing Danish products from store shelves. Kuwait's cooperative societies are community-owned grocery stores based in each residential district, and are the primary grocery shopping destination for most Kuwaitis. On January 28, the Chairman of the Cooperative Societies Union (CSU), Mohammed Amer Al-Mutairi, announced that Danish products will be removed from all cooperatives and their branches, indicating that roughly 275 Danish food and consumables products will be affected. The CSU's 50 societies account for the sale of 85% of Danish products in Kuwait, valued at roughly \$175 million per year.

¶3. (U) Some Kuwaiti lawmakers have called for an economic and diplomatic boycott of Denmark. According to the Arabic-language daily Al-Qabas, MP Fahad Al-Khana called for a strict stand and for Kuwait to break political, diplomatic, and economic relations with Denmark. A statement issued by the staff of Kuwait University supported the boycott and called for "applying international law to deter immoral behavior against religions and their symbols," although the statement did not specify which law that might be.

¶4. (U) Public reaction has been strong, including a January 28 peaceful protest of 5,000 people at the Danish consulate in Kuwait. Letters to the editor of the Arabic-language press express outrage. There is also a rumor circulating via SMS text message of a large-scale demonstration to take place in Copenhagen on February 4, that would include Koran-burning and other anti-Islamic behavior.

¶5. (U) Meanwhile, the GOK sent an unusually-worded circular to diplomatic missions condemning the cartoons but making no mention of the boycott. In that circular, the MFA quotes an "MFA official source" as stating that Kuwait has summoned the Danish Ambassador (resident in Riyadh) to Kuwait for

consultations about the cartoons. Text of the circular follows:

Begin text:
"Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Protocol Department

January 28, 2006

MFA Dip Note No. 000857

MFA of that State of Kuwait presents its compliments to all accredited diplomatic missions, consulates and regional/international organizations to Kuwait.

The following is a statement by an MFA official source regarding the defamation of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that was published by a Danish Newspaper.

"MFA official source declared that the State of Kuwait denies and condemns such defamation to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Also in his statement to KUNA: "Such defamation is a kind of racism that causes tragic calamity to the entire international society."

He added: "While Kuwait rejects such racial discrimination, Kuwait has taken a procedural action to call to Kuwait the Danish Ambassador accredited to Kuwait, but residing in Riyadh."

MFA source affirmed that Kuwait played a prominent role within the Arab & Islamic leagues calling for putting an end to such racial discrimination, which contradicts the ethics

KUWAIT 00000372 002 OF 002

of Islamic Sharia'a that always calls for anti-racism.

He continued: "Kuwait will continue playing its role to defend the high dignity of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Islamic ethics."

MFA avails itself of this opportunity to express its highest appreciations.

MFA - Protocol Department"
LeBaron